United Nations CEDAW/C/MHL/Q/1-3/Add.1

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
13 November 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-ninth session
19 February–9 March 2018
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined initial to third periodic reports of the Marshall Islands

Addendum

Replies of the Marshall Islands*

[Date received: 13 November 2017]

Note: The present document is being circulated in English, French and Spanish only.
* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

17-20046 (E) 221117

Please recycle

Acronyms

AG	Attorney General's Office
APF	Asian Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions
CDEMS	Chronic Disease Electronic Management System
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
Con. Con.	Constitutional Convention
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DAMA	Demand Assigned Multiple Access
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DV	Domestic Violence
DVPPA	Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act
EPPSO	Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office
FHSS	Family Health and Safety Study
FY	Fiscal Year
GAD	Gender And Development Office
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GRMI	Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
HIV/STI	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Sexually Transmitted Infections
HRC	Human Rights Committee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MCH	Maternal Child Health
MIMA	Marshall Islands Mayors Association
MIPD	Marshall Islands Police Department
MOCIA	Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs
MOHHS	Ministry of Health and Human Services
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
Nitijelā	Parliament
NSP	National Strategic Plan

NTHT	National Taskforce on Human Trafficking
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAP	Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy
PSS	Public School System
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
ROC	Republic of China
RRRT	Regional Rights Resource Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SPC	Pacific Community
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNTF	UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women
USD	United States (of America) Dollar
VAW	Violence Against Women
VIA	Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid
WHO	World Health Organization
WiM	Weto in Mour
WUTMI	Women United Together Marshall Islands
YTYIH	Youth to Youth In Health

Foreword

Traditionally women have been an integral part of decision making and peace keeping in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). Women are also traditional land owners. While this is still the case in many ways, it is clear that Western culture has begun to make an impact on Marshallese society, especially in the urban centres of Ebeye and Majuro.

With the introduction of western culture and ways, Marshallese beliefs and ideals were pushed aside. Especially in the urban centres, family ties and ideas of codependence are deteriorating. This means there are more women removed from the traditional protection of family compounds. There are more single mother heads of house, with less familial support.

The Government of the RMI (GRMI) is dedicated to re-establishing the voice of Marshallese women. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international obligations of the RMI help to establish a strong footing by which Marshallese women may step back into the light and sphere of social equality. From protection against violence to enhanced learning and improved healthcare the RMI wishes to provide for the needs and rights of our mothers, sisters, and daughters.

We appreciate this opportunity to share, learn, and grow as a nation.

(*Signed*) Ilo **Kautej**
GRMI

Legislative, policy and institutional framework

Issue 1

In paragraph 235 of the report, it is stated that although key human rights treaties have been ratified, there is no specific anti-discrimination legislation. Please indicate the measures that the State party envisages taking in order to integrate into the Constitution or other legislation a definition of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention. Please also provide examples of cases, if any, where the provisions of the Convention have been invoked by domestic courts.

1. No legislative instruments have specifically defined discrimination against women at this point. The Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (GRMI) recognizes this lack of clarification and intends to define discrimination against women in legislative bodies before the next CEDAW reporting cycle.

2. GRMI has yet to define discrimination against women in the Constitution. Unfortunately the 2017 Constitutional Convention (Con. Con.) closed before a proposal to define discrimination against women was submitted. GRMI intends to submit a proposal therefore at the next Con. Con. session.

3. As of yet, no cases have invoked the provisions of CEDAW in domestic courts.

Issue 2

In its report, the State party indicated that "Marshallese traditional custom or *manit* complements the Constitution" (para. 25). In accordance with the State party's obligations under articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and in line with target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, please provide information on the steps taken to ensure that applicable customary law does not discriminate against women and girls. Please indicate what measures are in place to ensure that customary law is consistently harmonized so that that it is in line with the provisions of the Convention. Please also provide information on the progress that has been made to establish an independent national human rights institution, with a broad mandate in the area of human rights, including women's rights and gender equality, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) (para. 68).

4. Marshallese custom and traditional practices make us who we are. There are many aspects of Marshallese custom that are good. These should be preserved and maintained by linking human rights, gender equality and inclusion for all into our basic life practices. Some examples of positive human rights empowerment within Marshallese culture include:

- The Bill of Rights in the Constitution (*The Jemen E*) enumerates civil rights and freedoms;
- Under the Constitution, the Nitijelā (Parliament), in consultation with the Council of *Iroij* (chiefs), may establish customary law through legislation;
- Traditionally, the Marshall Islands are a matrilineal society, where women are owners of land resources and have traditionally been respected as decision-makers;

- Traditional Marshallese custom (*manit*) includes defined roles for men and women that are often complementary and highlight the valuable contributions of each sex;
- Marshallese proverbs and stories reiterate lessons of respect for women, children and men alike.

5. The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) Public School System (PSS) with the assistance of the Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Rights Resources Team (RRRT) are reviewing elementary school curriculum to integrate social citizenship values, human rights obligations, gender equality, social inclusion, and nuclear issues into the formal school curriculum. The goal is to connect gender and social inclusion rights and responsibilities to Marshallese cultural values and practices in the school curriculum.

6. This project is intended to evolve into an opportunity for informal education components targeting out of school youths that can be introduced alongside the formal education module (i.e. outreach trainings/workshops for youths on outer islands).

7. This curriculum initiative is aimed at creating a generation of "social citizens". Social citizens are those able to claim their rights and also fulfil their responsibilities to other citizens and to the wider community. Building social citizens through formal education means instilling students with values of respect, dignity, care, consent, and responsible participation in the community. Nurturing social citizens means fostering a culture in schools that promotes the equal dignity and inclusion of all children regardless of gender or other differences. It also means promoting appropriate attitudes and behaviours that enable students to positively engage with their families and communities.

8. The goal of this project is to address root causes of gender inequality and gender based violence through formal education. The 'Whole School' program in partnership with SPC's Educational Quality and Assessment Program and Social Development Program will be comprised of six components:

- Integration of gender equality and human rights into the school curriculum;
- Delivery of teacher training sessions for teachers, as well as training sessions for other school staff, on gender equality and human rights to promote gender equality and human rights through example in formal education and allied school activities;
- Integration of gender equality and human rights into extra-curricular activities for students, including any music, theatre or dance activities, student clubs, campaigns, sports activities or environmental activities;
- Support for schools to adopt appropriate policies, including against sexual harassment and bullying, through participatory processes;
- Fostering of positive relationships between students, teachers, school staff, parents and communities in order to ensure support from all key stakeholders for gender equality and human rights in both formal education and the wider community;
- Creation of gender equality and human friendly classrooms/school environments.

9. Intended outcomes:

- Youth in the formative years of their development become critical thinkers and involved in gender equality, human rights and social change.

- Schools become hubs for nurturing core values around gender equality, non-discrimination, inclusion and participation, with continued positive effects in local communities;
- Students, teachers and school staff will be empowered to participate meaningfully and equally in the creation and implementation of gender equitable school policies and practices;
- Pacific Island governments become more aware of the benefits and importance of gender equality and human rights education as a means to bring about transformative change in attitudes and behaviours, and as part of the formation of socially responsible citizens;
- A comprehensive package of gender equality and human rights education (syllabus package and teacher training package) using a "whole school" approach specific to the Pacific context will be available for adaptation by interested Pacific Island governments;
- Gender equality and human rights education becomes institutionalized as part of primary school education in Pacific countries, opening up the possibility of extension into the secondary school level;
- The successful implementation of gender equality and human rights education using a "whole school" approach will encourage other Pacific Island governments to review their national curriculum frameworks with the view of introducing similar process.

10. Nitijelā Public Law 2015-46 provided the Con. Con. with a list of Nitijelā resolutions for consideration. To date, Proposal 18 to establish an Office of Ombudsman has passed the Con. Con. and is now awaiting Referendum. This is the final stage and once it is confirmed and approved by the people, this Office will be established.

11. In November 2016, GRMI requested technical assistance from the SPC RRRT and the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) to undertake a scoping study on the feasibility of establishing a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI).

12. The scoping study was conducted in March 2017. Study results were submitted to the RMI in September 2017. The following recommendations were made for the GRMI to consider:

- The Scoping Team recommended that the RMI establish a NHRI as a Constitutional Office with a status equivalent to that of the Office of the Auditor-General;
- The Scoping Team recommended that the currently convened Con. Con. be asked to consider the establishment of an Ombudsman's Office with both good governance and human rights mandates;
- If an Ombudsman's Office is established, it should comprise of a Chief Ombudsman and an Ombudsman or Deputy Ombudsman with specific responsibility for human rights — both full-time.

13. The legislation enabling the NHRI should provide a broad mandate:

- To promote and protect the human rights of every person in the Marshall Islands;
- To foster the dignity, equality and security of everyone in the Marshall Islands, including women, children and people with disabilities. As well as all citizens and residents whether permanent or temporary.

14. The primary objectives of the NHRI should be:

- To advocate and promote respect for and an understanding and appreciation of human rights;
- To ensure compliance with the Paris Principles and to build community trust in the NHRI throughout the Marshall Islands;
- To incorporate explicit legislative guarantees of its independence and provide for an open, transparent and inclusive hiring process.

Data collection

Issue 3

In paragraph 42 of the report, it is stated that there are no legal provisions for the collection of disaggregated data and that data collection needs to be improved and extended to other sectors. Please provide information on the specific measures that are being taken to establish a dedicated entity to ensure the systematic collection of comprehensive data disaggregated by sex and measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and girls, including for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the progress made in achieving substantive equality. Is it envisaged that laws governing the production of gender statistics envisaged will be adopted?

15. The Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO) is the central data collection body of the GRMI. EPPSO is mandated to collect data from all sectors. RMI notes the need to strengthen human and technical resources to enhance data collection and development. EPPSO has partnerships with SPC, UN Nations and other development partners to enhance its capacities. Technical assistance in creating a systematic collection of comprehensive data disaggregated by sex and measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and girls is being provided by SPC.

16. In November 2016, the RMI Cabinet approved the establishment of a National Strategic Plan (NSP)/Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Committee. The Committee Chairperson is the Minister in Assistance. The NSP/SDG Committee is tasked with implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the SDGs and the RMI's NSP. The Committee has 5 sub-committees, based on 5 Sector Areas of the NSP which are:

- Social Development;
- Environment, Climate Change and Resiliency;
- Infrastructure Development;
- Sustainable Economic Development;
- Good Governance.

17. The subcommittees are responsible for sharing progress and updates from their Ministerial objectives as align to the NSP and SDGs.

18. The NSP/SDG Social Development Sub Committee has identified goals and targets by which to monitor and enhance the substantive equality in the RMI.

19. No laws are in draft to monitor gender statistics at this time.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Issue 4

According to the report, the Gender and Development Office in the Ministry of Internal Affairs is the government body responsible for leading the advancement of gender equality in the State party (para. 64). However, the State party has not yet appointed gender focal points across government ministries and agencies (para. 65) and the financial resources allocated to the Office are limited. Furthermore, the State party's gender mainstreaming policy has yet to be implemented (para. 235). Please provide an update on the measures taken to appoint gender focal points and to implement the gender mainstreaming policy. Please also indicate what measures are being taken to improve skills in human rights analysis and gender mainstreaming, which are considered to be lacking in the State party (para. 67). Please provide detailed information on the challenges and achievements of the State party in implementing its gender-responsive budgeting activities. Please also indicate what steps have been taken to increase the budget allocation to the Office so that it can effectively undertake its activities as the national machinery for the advancement of women.

20. While RMI had yet to establish gender focal-point positions in government ministries/agencies it is anticipated that the NSP/SDG Social Development Sector Sub-Committee will create focal point positions throughout the GRMI by the end of FY 2018.

21. SPC Social Development Division assisted the Gender and Development (GAD) Office within the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs (MOCIA) to develop an implementation plan (2016) for the Gender Mainstreaming Policy 2014. There are five areas of focus in the gender mainstreaming policy:

- Strengthened Capacity across government to deliver gender-responsive programs and services;
- Secure family wellbeing;
- Elimination of gender-based violence and protection and care of survivors;
- Enabling environment for equitable participation in and benefit from, economic participation;
- Equitable Participation of women and men in decision-making.

22. Based on the results of the Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) 2014, GRMI allocated more funds and staff to address the elimination of gender-based violence and protection and care of survivors in FY 2016.

23. Proposal 21, which would allow witnesses to be compelled to give evidence against family members (spouse, parent, child, sibling, etc.) in domestic violence cases, was presented to the 2017 Con. Con. Unfortunately this proposal was defeated by the Con. Con.

24. In addition the RMI has recently approved four new positions, two social workers, a Human Rights officer, and a Children Project Coordinator. All of these positions were created to strengthen the GRMI's abilities to coordinate programs and align RMI legislation with the terms of the CRC, CEDAW and CRPD. This team works directly with the Human Rights Committee (HRC)/HRC Working Group and their secretariat for the continued improvement of Human Rights in the RMI.

25. The GAD Office was the recipient of the *Aenemon* (Peace) Project grant by the United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF). This grant awarded the GAD Office for distribution to local partners such as Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) and Marshall Islands Police Department (MIPD) in order to combat domestic violence (DV) and violence against women (VAW). For example, GAD Office had an awareness raising program on 25 November 2016 for the International Day for the Elimination of VAW. The *Aenemon* Project also funded trainings for the Domestic Violence Unit of the MIPD and helps WUTMI with its outreach and awareness programs as well.

26. GRMI through the GAD office allocated 120,000 USD to WUTMI in FY2016 to fund the *Weto in Mour* Project (WiM). The Australian Government through the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Initiative supports the WiM program as well.

27. WiM is the first ever national support service for survivors of violence - not only in the Marshall Islands, but also in the North Pacific region. The program is women-centred, aiming to enable more women and girls throughout the Marshall Islands to live free of violence through the provision of prevention, intervention and systemic and institutional strengthening activities. WiM provides free access to legal services with support from the Micronesian Legal Services Corporation. Through WiM, women and girls have a greater chance of accessing legal support, particularly getting protection orders, and having their case continue to the court. WiM continues to develop its own database. Once this is set up, WUTMI intends to generate reports from the database for its own and partner use to monitor and evaluate WUTMI's responses and capabilities to effectively combat violence against women and girls.

28. A Treaty Reporting Workshop for the members of the HRC was held in Majuro, from 23-24 February 2017. The workshop was led by SPC RRRT in partnership with the UN Human Rights Pacific Office (OHCHR). The objectives of this training were to impart knowledge of treaty reporting, [especially on the CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)) to members of the HRC, to build capacity for timely and effective reporting and to effectively implement UN Committee recommendations.

29. Key outcomes of this training were:

- Increased participant understanding of the functions and mandate of the HRC and their responsibilities as members;
- Increased understanding of the value of human rights reporting and UN Committee recommendations as a tool for developing and progressing national policy agendas;
- Increased knowledge of the main treaties of relevance to RMI (CEDAW, CRC and CRPD);
- Commitment to improve operation of the Committee including more regular meetings;
- Commitment to complete CRPD report and prepare adequately for UN Committee dialogues scheduled for early 2018.

30. In 2017 RMI in collaboration with SPC RRRT and UN OHCHR conducted workshops/consultations on human rights treaty reporting and implementation:

- CEDAW Shadow Report training with local Civil Society Organizations including WUTMI, Youth to Youth in Health (YTYIH), REACH Marshall Islands, etc.;
- Human Rights awareness materials were developed and used in department heads' meetings;
- MOCIA's annual report was presented during the WUTMI annual conference and the Educational Summit on Ebeye.

31. In the latter part of 2016 a number of workshops/consultations were conducted on human rights, gender equality and inclusion with RMI public school principals and head teachers, the Marshall Islands Mayors' Association (MIMA), and students from Majuro and Arno. Public awareness activities were also conducted during local events such as *Manit* (Cultural) Day, 16 Days of Activism, and WUTMI's annual conference.

32. The Attorney General's Office (AG) has a representative being trained in the area of human rights dealing with UN Refugee administration. The Protection Learning Program not only deals with protection of Refugees/Stateless/Asylum seekers, but also human rights issues involving women and children refugees who may come ashore in the RMI. Although the RMI is not a member of the UNHCR Convention on Refugees, the RMI notes this new program and acknowledges the likelihood of a new initiative proposed for legislative and/or policy reform coming out of this program.

33. GRMI is challenged with data collection and analysis on gender budgeting efforts and activities in the RMI. GRMI has begun to seek support from development partners to better report on such matters in the next CEDAW Reporting cycle. The GRMI also recognizes the importance of building and maintaining an accountable and reliable database of sex-disaggregated gender focused information for use and dissemination across our National and Global communities.

Temporary special measures

Issue 5

The State party report is silent on the legislative and other measures aimed at increasing the number of women in decision-making bodies at all levels and in all areas. Please provide information on temporary special measures already instituted and/or envisaged, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, to accelerate the realization of the de facto equality of women with men.

34. Proposals 9 and 13 are Nitijelā resolutions that were shared with the Con. Con. for consideration.

- Proposal. 9- sought to amend the Constitution to establish a quota or reserved seats (6) explicitly for women: 2 seats from Majuro Atoll, 1 from Jaluit Atoll, 1 from Kwajalein Atoll, 1 from Arno Atoll and 1 from Ailinglaplap Atoll. After the bill was passed from Nitijelā it then reverted to the Con. Con. for deliberations as well as public consultation. Unfortunately, this proposal was defeated in the 2017 Con. Con.;
- Proposal 13- sought to amend provisions under the Equal Protection and Freedom in the Constitution, to include sexual orientation as a basis for non-discrimination. Unfortunately, this proposal was defeated in the 2017 Con. Con.

35. At this time the GRMI has not committed to any other special measures that would accelerate the equality of women with men. However, there is nothing in our laws that actually prevent a woman from taking top positions. It should be worth noting that there are increasing numbers of women in high level government positions, management, government boards and diplomatic posts. Our highlight in this area is that in 2015 and after 39 years of independence, the Marshall Islands elected three women to parliament, one of whom is currently President of the RMI. Other positions listed below are occupied by females:

- Minister of Culture and Internal Affairs;
- Secretary of Health and Human Services;
- Secretary of Resources & Development;
- Secretary of Finance;
- Administrator of Marshall Islands Social Security;
- Clerk of the Nitijelā;
- Chief Clerk of Courts;
- Clerk of Council of Iroij.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

Issue 6

Please provide information on the measures taken to develop a comprehensive policy to change social and cultural patterns that lead to stereotyping and reinforcement of the traditional roles of women and men within the family and society, particularly targeting gender socialization practices, which promote men as breadwinners (para. 92) and women as mothers. Please also provide information on the role of the Gender and Development Office in implementing such measures, including raising awareness of gender stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women in society. Please indicate what impact such measures have had in eliminating stereotypical perceptions and attitudes regarding the roles of women in society and in the family, as well as in addressing the persistence of harmful practices such as child marriages.

36. Policies aimed at changing social and cultural patterns of gender stereotyping in the RMI include:

- Gender Mainstreaming Policy 2014;
- Right of Persons with Disability Policy 2015;
- Child Rights Protection Policy 2015;
- Gender Equality and Social Action Plan 2017–2020 Goals:
    - Boys and girls benefit equally;
    - Teaching is free of gender stereotypes and discrimination;
    - Zero tolerance of bullying and sexual harassment;
    - Students keep themselves safe and respect each other;
    - Students are educated about sustainable developments, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and cultural diversity.

37. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy Implementation Plan 2016 aims to change social/cultural patterns regarding the traditional roles of men and women. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy 2014 attempts to address several of the issues that generally cause inequality for women in the Marshall Islands.

38. The GRMI has not sponsored any programs that specifically challenge traditional/customary roles of men and women.

39. It is important to note that the roles of women in the Marshall Islands, as the nurturer, provider, caretaker, the owner of land are still recognized today even if not fully practiced by some. The status of women was always and it still is of great respect. As noted above, RMI is going to the source by educating children, the future generation, about human dignity and core values of respect, human rights and responsibility. Experience has shown that changes in laws and policies have not necessarily improved the lives of women/disabled or enabled them to control all aspects of their lives. People from all levels need to be informed, involved in law-making and aware of how laws can positively affect their lives. The RMI decided to start with our young, future right holders and duty bearers.

40. The GAD Office has been using the FHSS 2014 as a basis for organizing mobile teams, consisting of personnel from several government offices and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to raise awareness on health, women's care, child protection, domestic violence and gender rights in 16 of the 24 jurisdictions of the RMI.

41. In addition, WUTMI is a NGO dedicated to women's rights and family values in the RMI, who has worked closely with the MOCIA, specifically the GAD office in targeting gender equality and women girls rights. One of WUTMI's goals is to strengthen and promote Marshallese culture and language. WUTMI has taken a leading role in being vocal about the negative social and cultural practices and beliefs about women and young girls.

Gender-based violence against women

Issue 7

In paragraph 47, it is indicated that a study that was conducted in the four atolls of Majuro, Kwjalein (Ebeye), Mili and Ebon revealed that gender-based violence against women is a major issue, such that about 80 per cent of women reported having experienced physical violence. Information before the Committee also indicates that there is a high level of gender-based violence against women in the State party, with a high degree of acceptance of gender-based violence against women as "normal". Please provide information on the challenges and successes in the implementation of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act, 2011. Please indicate whether there are budgetary commitments for the implementation of the Act. Please state whether the definition of rape includes marital rape. Please also provide information on the specific role of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act Technical Working Group in coordinating the implementation of the Act, particularly in the outer islands, where physical violence is reportedly prevalent (para. 230). Please indicate what measures have been taken to raise awareness to improve societal attitudes towards gender-based violence against women and girls. Please also indicate whether the use of corporal punishment on girls is prohibited in both family and school settings.

42. Punishments under the DVPPA are lenient compared to the Criminal Code, therefore, cases that do go to court are generally filed under the Criminal Code for

harsher punishment. However, it is known that cases can be filed under both the Criminal Code and the DVPPA.

43. The 24 atolls and islets of the RMI are dispersed over 700,000 square miles of ocean. This makes the transportation of information, supplies, and personnel a challenge. The local aviation service has two planes that are often grounded for maintenance and repair. Travel by boat is expensive, tedious and time consuming. Therefore, GRMI continues to lack the financial and technical ability to supply the outer island needs with consistency.

44. The MIPD has been given more authority to investigate DV cases due to the creation of the DVPPA. Since Marshallese society is close knit, the sensitive nature of domestic cases is often challenging for our officers to investigate. However, more and more people are now aware of this Act and the measures therein to prevent or penalize domestic violence.

45. Local and state Judges have received training provided by the SPC RRRT on presiding over DV/VAW cases. WUTMI was on hand to provide talks about DV/VAW and the services they provide to victims of violence. Comments during the workshop showed limited knowledge on the dynamics of VAW, and the culture around VAW in the RMI, particularly on the outer islands.

46. The Domestic Violence Protocol or Standard of Care for Health Care Providers was developed in partnership with WUTMI. This policy aims to provide standards of care for health care systems and providers to address the needs of individuals receiving care for domestic violence within their systems. The protocol describes in detail how to respond, support, and document when caring for individuals who are experiencing domestic violence.

47. The Child Rights Protection Policy 2015 provides that all regular and volunteer teachers are required to make a signed declaration of compliance with the Code of Conduct for Working with Children as a condition of their engagement. This includes an agreement to report to the designated child protection officer at PSS whenever there is reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is at potential risk of harm. Under the code of conduct, all regular and volunteer teachers and staff must, amongst other things, not use or threat to use physical punishment on children.

48. The use of corporal punishment is prohibited in our schools, as stated in the Child Rights Protection Act (2015). The DVPPA covers the prohibition of multiple acts of violence in the home. However corporal punishment is not explicitly stated to be prohibited in the DVPPA.

49. As mentioned in Issue 4, GAD Office received a grant called the *Aenemon* (Peace) Project to assist with the implementation of the DVPPA. This project funds trainings of officers and government workers on how to respond to DV situations. A partnership with WUTMI and the MIPD helps to raise understanding and knowledge of the DVPPA among law enforcement as well as service providers. GRMI through the GAD office allocated 120,000 USD to WUTMI in FY2016 to fund the *Weto in Mour* Project (WiM). WiM, as a dedicated shelter for battered girls and women is a major player in the fight against DV.

50. In 2014, the DVPPA Technical Working Group was established based for the *Aenemon* Project Award. The group was comprised of representatives from MOCIA, MIPD, AG, WUTMI, Faith Based Organizations, Ministry of Health and Human Services (MOHHS), PSS and Micronesian Legal Services Corporation. The purpose of the working group was to review the implementation plan and carry out activities within their respective agencies. These are most of the same agencies that participated in the mobile team outreach programs.

51. In 2013, a number of changes to the Criminal Code 2011 were made. The Criminal Code was amended to update sexual assault laws. The statutory framework has evolved to address domestic and sexual violence. Among the changes were the expansion of the definition of rape to include a broadened definition of sexual penetration and the removal of the exception to rape for forced sex with a marital partner.

52. The new law provided for different degrees of sexual assault. It recognized non-consensual sexual contact without penetration as sexual assault. It criminalized sexual contact with a female under the age of 16 without regard to consent. The new law also provided a victim's testimony was not required to be corroborated and the victim did not need to resist the actor for an offense to occur.

53. The RMI government contracted WUTMI to conduct the Family Health and Safety Study (FHSS) 2014 which was a comprehensive study on the prevalence of violence against women in the RMI. This study revealed that nearly 70% of women in the RMI experience physical, sexual, emotional and/or financial abuse.

54. WUTMI has developed a four-hour in-depth community education curriculum about gender-based violence. WUTMI piloted the curriculum earlier this year and has been actively implementing the curriculum on five islands and with the Marshallese community in the state of Hawaii (the closest Marshallese population outside the Marshall Islands). WUTMI has also developed awareness materials to include brochures on the basic information about VAW, posters to address power and control, sticky notepads with short and sharp messages about the DVPPA, and a pamphlet that goes more into detail about the DVPPA. WUTMI conducted a study in March 2017 on the values and attitudes toward violence against women. More targeted materials will be developed based on the outcomes of this study.

Issue 8

Please provide information on the number of protection orders that have been issued since the adoption of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act and the number of those that have been violated, as well as the sanctions that have been imposed for violating such orders (para. 31). Please also provide data, disaggregated by age and type of offence, on cases of violence against women reported to the police, the number of cases brought to court and the number of prosecutions and convictions resulting from those cases. Please provide information on the impact of the "No-drop" policy in addressing domestic violence and encouraging reporting by victims (para. 38). Please provide information on how nationwide data is collected, collated, analysed and shared for the purpose of effectively combating gender-based violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, particularly in the outer islands.

55. Since the inception of the DVPPA 2015, there have been a total of 48 DV protection orders issued out by the courts. Out of these 48 cases:

- 25* were Granted;
- 7 were dismissed by plaintiff;
- 7 were dismissed by court;
- 7 were dismissed by stipulation;

* Two protection orders were violated and judgment was imposed on the offenders by the courts. According to the DVPPA "a person who breaches the protection order commits an offense and shall upon conviction be punishable by a term of imprisonment of 6 months or a find of 1,000 USD or both."

- 1 was dismissed by petitioners;
- 1 is pending.

56. Out of the 48 protection orders, 47 were issued to females and 1 to a male. 12 cases of criminal offenses against women have been investigated and prosecuted.

57. In 2016, the Office of the Attorney-General filed 18 criminal cases in the High Court: 13 in Majuro and 5 in Ebeye. Of the 13 Majuro cases, females were the victims in four cases: an adult woman was the victim in the sexual assault case; an adult woman was victim in an aggravated assault/assault with a deadly weapon (by her husband); an adult woman was the victim in an assault by another woman (the prosecutor dismissed the case when the victim failed to appear); and a two-year old girl was killed by her father in a drunken rage. Of the five Ebeye cases, women were the victims in three sexual assault cases.

58. The "No Drop Policy" has been effective in increasing the number of cases that have been processed. Public awareness from key stakeholders such as WUTMI and MOCIA aided in this initiative.

59. Data sharing is done by key agencies dealing with domestic issues alongside MIPD. The MOCIA is the focal point for collecting data on gender-based violence against women in coordination with the MIPD's Domestic Violence Unit. However, GRMI hopes to relocate all data collection and analysing to EPPSO by the next CEDAW Reporting cycle.

Issue 9

It is indicated in the report that penalties for violence against women in the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act overlap with the provisions of the Criminal Code for similar offences, so that certain offences are punishable by either lighter or heavier penalties, depending on which law the charges are laid under (para. 233). Please provide information on the measures being taken to address the overlap in the criminal regulation of various offences related to gender-based violence against women, which affects the nature of the penalties that can be imposed. In the report, it is also indicated that gender-based violence against women is a challenge that is complicated by, inter alia, social practices and a lack of institutional support and agencies to provide relief or shelters (paras. 232 and 233). Please provide information on the availability and accessibility of shelters for women and girls who are victims of violence, particularly in the outer islands, and the nature of their funding, including the source, sustainability and extent of that funding.

60. Currently, MIPD reports these matters to the MOCIA during the investigative stage and from there MOCIA coordinates with WUTMI to ensure shelter for victims. WUTMI is leading WiM which is an initiative created to tend to and protect the needs of women/children victims of violence. WiM also offers services to the outer islands.

61. The RMI realizes that the DVPPA overlaps in criminal regulation of offences related to gender-based VAW. The overlap only pertains to sexual assault. GRMI has yet to address the overlap however GAD office intends to address the overlap before the next CEDAW Reporting cycle.

62. Under the WiM Program, emergency accommodation is provided to victims until family members are identified whom the victim(s) feel safe staying with. The program also provides emergency transportation to outer island victims who are then able to access the range of services WiM offers in Majuro. Unfortunately, this program is not universally available in the outer islands. The Caseworkers and

Prevention workers make trips to outer islands and can provide what services they can. Sometimes victims travel back to Majuro with the WiM workers. It is a goal of WiM's to establish a safe haven; however WiM does not have the human or financial capacity to establish a shelter at this time. WiM is funded by GRMI and AusAid Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development.

Trafficking

Issue 10

Information before the Committee indicates that the State party is a source and destination country for trafficking. In paragraph 97 of the report, the State party indicated that "there is limited data on the demographics of the women who are victims of trafficking, the people who facilitate the trafficking of women, the reasons why women engage in sex work". Please provide information on the measures being taken to conduct a comprehensive study to investigate the extent and root causes of trafficking in persons and the exploitation of prostitution, particularly of women and girls, in the State party. In paragraph 101, it is stated that a national task force on human trafficking provides a forum for the discussion of and consultation on issues pertaining to human trafficking and makes recommendations to the Government. Please provide information on:

(a) **The current legal framework to combat trafficking in persons;**

(b) **The number of cases investigated and prosecuted and the nature of sanctions imposed on the perpetrators of trafficking in human beings, particularly involving the trafficking of women and girls;**

(c) **The measures in place to, inter alia, identify, screen, protect and assist women and girls who are victims of trafficking and raise public awareness of trafficking in human beings;**

(d) **The measures taken to combat the recruitment of women and girls as sex workers for crew members aboard foreign fishing and trans-shipping vessels that put in at Maduro, including women from East Asia, who are forced into prostitution in onshore establishments that are patronized by the crew members of foreign fishing vessel.**

63. The Presidents of ROC (Taiwan) and the RMI appeared at a signing ceremony of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) "Concerning Cooperation in Immigration Affairs and Human Trafficking Prevention" on Monday, 30 October 2017 in Majuro. The MOU detailed the ways in which the respective parties should assist one another in addressing issues of immigration and human trafficking:

- To facilitate the exchange of criminal information;
- To facilitate exchange visits for official business;
- To invite one to three immigration officers from the other Party to participate in immigration training held by one of the Parties if possible;
- To implement other mutual assistance that might be requested but not mentioned above.

64. The Prohibition of Trafficking in Human Persons Act 2017 makes human trafficking in the Marshall Islands illegal. MIPD currently has no concrete policies with regards to dealing with victims of Human Trafficking. However, the MIPD works with other stakeholders to assist victims when cases are brought to their attention. Then cases are brought to the AG's Office for prosecution. Other relevant

stakeholders may provide available services to victims of trafficking such as health care.

65. The National Taskforce on Human Trafficking (NTHT) has started conversations with the US Embassy to secure funding through the Department of State's Office for training and technical assistance to better monitor and combat Trafficking in Persons and to implement a comprehensive study on human trafficking in the RMI.

66. The Endorsed Terms of Reference and National Action Plan on Human Trafficking include an active taskforce in Majuro, and working group in Ebeye. These are comprised of government, civil society and international organizations.

67. The NTHT has created a human trafficking awareness raising curriculum for schools and communities. Since 2015 the Taskforce has reached over 5,000 women, men, boys and girls in Majuro, Ebeye, Jaluit, Wotje, and Kili. This includes a training of trainers in both Majuro and Ebeye to conduct awareness raising sessions. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) held a training of Trainers on Psychological First Aid (50 participants) in October/November 2017.

68. There have been 4 trainings (building upon the last with the same participants), for law enforcement, on capacity building for the identification, investigation and prosecution of human trafficking.

69. There are drafted Standard Operating Procedures for law enforcement on human trafficking. There are also drafted Standard Operating Procedures of referral regarding human trafficking for service providers. The Taskforce hopes to have these procedures finalized by 2018. A mapping of service providers for survivor assistance has been completed. The WiM program by WUTMI supports survivors of trafficking that are women and girls 14+. There are memorandums of understanding for service provision between IOM and WUTMI and between WUTMI and MIPD.

70. Research has been conducted by Ministry of Health and Human Services (MOHHS) to better understand trafficking practices in the RMI. There is still much work to be done to address the issue. Review of Immigration Policy and Legislation is under way to identify and correct gaps to reduce the risk of human trafficking. Procurement of a new border management system is under way that will help prevent human trafficking.

Participation in political and public life

Issue 11

In paragraph 14 of the report, it is indicated that, although there has been some improvement in the representation of women in decision-making bodies, including the election of the first female President, they remain underrepresented particularly in the parliament (the Council of Iroji and the Nitijelā) and the judiciary. Please provide information on the steps envisaged to increase the number of women elected and appointed to decision-making bodies, including statutory boards, trade unions and local councils, and to achieve equal representation of women in political and public life, including through the adoption of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25. Please provide, in particular, information on measures taken or envisaged, in accordance with general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in public life, to introduce a system of quotas that would aim at achieving, at a minimum, a 30 per cent representation of women in the parliament, and to support women candidates for elected positions, particularly in the parliament (paras. 12 and

106). Please indicate whether there are incentives for political parties to include women on lists of candidates for national and local elections.

71. As previously mentioned, Con. Con. 2017 Proposal 9 proposed to reserve six seats in the Nitijelā explicitly for women. Unfortunately this proposal was not adopted.

72. There are three women representatives in Nitijelā as of today. There have been no special measures introduced yet, to increase the representation of women in parliament. GRMI recognizes this is an area of need and intends to address the issue before long.

73. Under the Gender mainstreaming Policy's Strategic Actions:

- Provide more civic education, gender equality, and human rights in the school curriculum (ongoing);
- Increase political party support for female candidates, (yet to be implemented);
- Increase the knowledge and capacity of members of the Nitijelā to take into account the gender perspective (ongoing);
- Strengthen the leadership, communication and advocacy skills of female candidates (yet to be implemented);
- Host events for women to discuss politics (ongoing);
- Organize mock Nitijelā sessions for women at national and local level (ongoing every 4 years);
- Raise awareness and advocate for Temporary Special Measures;
- Amend the Constitution to allow for Temporary Special Measures (proposal 9 to the Con. Con. was defeated).

74. GRMI has yet to introduce a system of quotas that would encourage the support of women in Nitijelā. There are also no incentives for political parties to include women candidates.

Education

Issue 12

In paragraph 132 of the report, it is acknowledged that the incidence of teenage pregnancy is high and that the State party records the highest rate of adolescent fertility in the Pacific region. Please provide detailed information on the programmes in place aimed at reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy. In paragraph 133, it is indicated that, under the public high school rules and regulations, a pregnant student is permitted to remain in school as long as her pregnancy does not affect her grades or attendance, but that the policy does not apply to private schools. Please provide information on the uniform application of that policy to private schools and the re-entry of teenage mothers into formal education, including private schools, after delivery. Please also provide an update on the progress made to develop an age-appropriate education programme on sexual and reproductive health and rights for all levels of education in the State party. Please provide data on:

(a) The dropout rates of girls owing to pregnancy and the levels at which they occur;

(b) **The indirect costs that might impede the access of women and girls to education;**

(c) **The number of teenage mothers who have returned to school after giving birth during the reporting period.**

75. PSS under the Ministry of Education, Sports and Training has not created a uniform pregnancy policy for private and public schools. However, counselling by a female counsellor is available for all female students in public secondary school. Pregnant girls who wish to return to school immediately are permitted 15 excused absences before, during or after birth. If student mothers decide to leave school, they are able to return in the following school year.

76. From FY2006 to FY2015, there was a 40% decrease in teen pregnancy. The MOHHS, YTYIH, WUTMI, and other stakeholders are very active in providing services and information on teen pregnancy. The MOHHS recognizes the urgency of taking big actions to reduce teen pregnancy. In order to scale-up efforts to prevent adolescent pregnancy in the RMI MOHHS, YTYIH and United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) have identified the need for a rights based, action oriented strategic plan for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy. Imperative in its development was an assessment of existing adolescent pregnancy programs. Focus group discussions with youth and young parents, and interviews with key stakeholders were conducted by Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiatives, Inc. in conjunction with YTYIH on the atolls of Majuro, Kwajalein, Wotje and Jaluit. Findings from the assessment were incorporated into the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy (PAP) Strategy. The development of the PAP Strategy followed a global and regional evidence base, as well as national and local experience and lessons learned. The PAP Strategy also took into consideration cultural and societal context as appropriate.

77. PSS has implemented a new data collection program called PowerSchool Student Information System at three public high schools. This program is able to collect data and record incidents (e.g., # of pregnant girls at school), reported by students.

78. The Presidents of the Republic of China (ROC) (Taiwan) and the RMI appeared at a signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding on "ROC (Taiwan) - RMI Presidents Scholarship Fund".

79. At the moment, EPPSO does not have disaggregated data on the dropout rate of female students owing to pregnancy and the number of teenage mothers who have returned to school after giving birth. EPPSO recognizes this as an opportunity to expand its data collection and anticipates the creation of a women's indicator database to better assist in the GRMI's future reporting.

80. Schools are visited by MOHHS, YTYIH and other organizations to raise awareness on the importance of health and education. Boys and girls are separated to discuss issues like pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

81. See Appendix, Issue 12 for graphs on teen pregnancy as collected by the MOHHS.

Issue 13

In the report, it is indicated that traditional attitudes and customs still exert pressure over educational choices (para. 131). Please provide information on the specific measures in place to encourage girls to pursue non-traditional courses, in particular those in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Please also provide information on the progress made to:

(a) **Revise school textbooks in order to remove gender stereotypes;**

(b) **Improve access to learning materials for women and girls in outer island schools (para. 126).**

82. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) courses are offered to all students. At high schools, girls are encouraged to choose what STEM programs they want to study. The Division of Secondary and Career Education within PSS has started to revise its curriculum for all students. PSS is working with SPC RRRT to develop a curriculum for primary education that emphasizes gender equality and nuclear legacy. In the outer islands high schools (Jaluit High School & Northern Islands High School), female students have access to all the core subjects taught. They also have access to vocational training in subjects such as accounting, information technology and more.

Employment

Issue 14

In paragraph 147 of the report, it is indicated that the number of women employed by the Public Service Commission has increased over the last three calendar years. Please provide data on the labour participation of women in the private sector. Please also provide an update on progress made:

(a) **To pass the bill that was introduced in the parliament in March 2016, which seeks to amend the minimum wage (para. 145);**

(b) **To enact additional legislation to provide for health and safety and address concerns over worker's compensation, particularly women (para. 148).**

83. **Please also provide information on the concrete measures taken:**

(a) **To improve the rate of employment of women, including through the use of temporary special measures;**

(b) **To enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), in order to close the wage gap between women and men (para. 151).**

Please indicate what measures are being taken:

(a) **To improve the availability of childcare facilities;**

(b) **To enact a law to provide for maternity leave for private sector employees;**

(c) **To review the pay scale set by the Public Service Commission that is based on education, experience and job responsibilities (paras. 150 and 151).**

Please also indicate whether the law provides for maternity leave in accordance with ILO standards.

84. After the minimum wage was increased to 2.50 USD an hour, the Nitijelā adopted another amendment which aims to study the impact increased wages will have on our economy. Further increases to the minimum wage may be dependent on this analysis.

85. Nitijelā has recently introduced a bill on Marshall Islands Employment Equal Benefits that is currently being debated.

86. At this time, no concrete measures have been taken to improve the rate of employment of women, including through the use of temporary special measures.

87. No concrete measures have been taken to enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951.

88. The GRMI still needs to call the Board of Inquiry to meet and discuss a plan to close the wage gap between women and men.

89. Culturally extended family is always so prevalent and close at hand that childcare is always been assumed to be a family task. The GRMI has not moved towards providing childcare programs or regulations.

90. The Public Service Regulations entails the government employment system. The Regulations on maternity leave states:

"Female employees may be granted maternity leave for such periods and subject to such conditions as the Commission from time to time prescribes. The following conditions for maternity leave shall be followed:

(1) The employee shall be entitled to 20 work days of maternity leave. This leave can be taken before and/or after delivery;

(2) The employee on maternity leave shall be paid full salary;

(3) Maternity leave shall be granted only for four deliveries.

If a female employee requires maternity leave for more than four deliveries or requests for more leave due to unfitness to return to duty station, 20 working days maternity leave shall be granted chargeable to her accumulated annual leave or sick leave or special leave."

Health

Issue 15

In the report, the State party indicated that more women than men have died from cancer caused by radiation associated with the nuclear testing programme of the United States of America (para. 164). It is also indicated that women from four nuclear-affected atolls suffer from the effects of nuclear testing, which has had an impact on their sexual and reproductive health, as the radiation has affected their ability to bear healthy children (para. 210). In the report, it is further stated that women:

(a) Suffered high rates of miscarriages;

(b) Gave birth to babies with severe birth defects;

(c) Suffered changes in menstrual cycles and a subsequent inability to conceive.

Please provide information on the measures being taken to address those impacts on women and girls, including the attendant high incidence of thyroid cancer. Specifically, please provide information on the concrete measures being taken to verify the extent to which radionuclides were actually present in the breast milk of women exposed to nuclear testing, so that the risks to individuals who were breastfed by those women and the medical interventions subsequently available to them can be properly assessed.

91. There is an existing prenatal committee that reviews and assesses prenatal deaths. The committee discusses improvement plans and policies on how to improve services and quality of care.

92. The creation of the 177 Health Care Program was developed in 1983 to address health issues of the women who are citizens of the Marshall Islands impacted by nuclear testing by the United States in the four (4) atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utrôk. There were four health centres built. One in Kili for the Bikini people, the other in Mejatto for the Rongelap people, one in Enewetak and one in Utrôk. The Majuro clinic centre manages logistics for the 4 outer atoll health centres and also caters to the four atoll populations residing in Majuro. The 177 Primary Health Centres are manned by regular certified medical physicians and also a certified Health Assistant on the four atolls. Prenatal care is provided with proper equipment to assist with monitoring pregnancies. Any pregnant woman identified as high risk, is referred to the nearest urban health center (Majuro Hospital or Ebeye Hospital).

93. The Micronesian Women's Conference 2017 "recommended the development and implementation of gender responsive policies and programs where appropriate for the inter-generational effects of nuclear testing, including on women's health and other areas; the conference recognized and affirmed the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017)." The RMI has adopted this recommendation.

94. National Cancer Prevention activities include church-to-clinic cancer screening campaigns in Majuro, Ebeye, and working with the outer islands (through MIMA). Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA) screening is now implemented in the outer islands (Women Ages 30-49 years) and pap smears are conducted for women ages 21-65 years. The main challenge for cervical cancer screening is the fact that we have no Cytologist/pathologist and all specimens have to be sent off-island. Breast screening is done with mammography machines in both Majuro and Ebeye. The National Cancer program is continuously searching for new ways to strengthen the knowledge of breast self-exams and clinical breast exams. Colorectal cancer screening is primarily done with a Faecal Occult Blood Test. There are also upcoming healthcare provider trainings to educate on Colorectal Cancer, to build knowledge and capacity to increase screening rates. These three cancers (Breast, Cervical and Colorectal) are being prioritized by MOHHS in line with available resources, and are set in the current national cancer screening guidelines.

95. MOHHS has worked diligently in the past few years to improve and implement data collection and reporting through program based information systems.

- Cancer Registry: stores information on all confirmed cancer patients in RMI. The Cancer Registrar works closely with Medical Records, Vital Statistics, Medical Referral, Laboratory and clinicians to trace cancer patients;
- Cervical Cancer Screening: system created through several consultations team members led by the Chief of Staff and Maternal Child Health (MCH) program Director. This system was implemented in August 2017. Data will be available from this system starting next year;
- Chronic Disease Electronic Management System (CDEMS): is currently implemented for Diabetes monitoring in Majuro Clinic, Ebeye Clinic, and Laura Clinic;
- Diabetes Registry: following the RMI Diabetes Clinical Management Guidelines information from CDEMS is used as a tool for clinicians to know track a patient's medical history;

- Epi anywhere: information system for HIV/STI and Tuberculosis program which follows clinical management guidelines set by our partners, World Health Organization (WHO) and Centres for Disease Control (CDC);
- Family Planning Database: provides unduplicated information on users of Family Planning services;
- Hospital Based System: stores outpatient and inpatient data that can produce reports related to diseases and demographics of patients that use hospital services;
- Marshall Islands WebIZ: an immunization information system that stores vaccination history;
- Medical Referral Information System: handles the basic and supplemental enrolments as well as basic and supplemental referrals for the RMI;
- Prenatal database: provides data on pregnancy management;
- Vital Records Information System: holds the birth, death and fetal death certificates which provide indicators on infant mortality rates, neonatal mortality rates, maternal mortality rates, crude death rates, crude birth rates, skilled birth attendants, and teen births.

96. See Appendix, Issue 15 for graphs on women's health management provided by MOHHS.

Issue 16

Please provide information on the measures taken to adopt a definition of a skilled birth attendant, in line with internationally agreed definitions, and on the steps taken to improve data collection on maternal mortality. Please indicate what measures are in place to address the high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections. Please provide information on the incidence of unsafe abortions and the impact on women's health, including maternal mortality. Please also provide information regarding the grounds on which an abortion can be procured and whether abortion has been decriminalized in all cases. Please also respond to reports that abortion requires spousal consent.

97. Skilled Birth attendants in the RMI have received proper training in line with the WHO standards. They are midwives, nurses, health assistants and doctors.

98. The MCH program has improved promotion and awareness of the vitality of early prenatal care through community awareness. There is an ongoing a pregnancy risk category scale that is evaluated during each prenatal visit. Once pregnant mother is identified as high risk, they are given high level care by their OBGYN.

99. For any women or patient tested for HIV/STI, treatment and care is provided immediately upon receiving confirmatory tests. Contact tracing for STI patients is in place. Test for cure is performed once a patient has completed treatment.

100. Community awareness along with the engagement of the National Advisory Committee in HIV/STI initiatives increases the level of knowledge disseminated about HIV/STIs.

101. Abortion is not practiced in RMI. In the event that the procedure is deemed a medical emergency the procedure will be conducted. This procedure usually takes in the clinic under the supervision of an OBGYN when it has been established that there is an intrauterine fetal or embryonic demise.

102. See Appendix, Issue 16 for table and graph provided by MOHHS.

Rural women

Issue 17

In paragraph 185 of the report, it is stated that the "widely dispersed populations, remoteness and limited communications and transportations of the outer islands means real constraints on the equal access and efficiency of service delivery". Please provide information on the measures taken to address the problem of limited public services and infrastructure in the outer islands (para. 187). Please indicate the measures being taken to adopt a development program targeted at rural women, which is acknowledged to be non-existent in the State party (para. 187). Specifically, please provide information on the programs targeted at rural women in the outer islands to ensure their access to:

(a) **Health-care services, sanitation and electricity;**

(b) **Agricultural credits and transportation (paras. 185, 195, 197, 202, 203 and 206).**

Please also indicate what programs are in place to ensure their access to information, modern technologies, employment, social protection and adult education.

103. The GRMI continues to struggle with achieving the proper capacity for initiating, supplying and sustaining outer island support. Human, technical and financial resources continue to be lacking and what resources are available are often unable to reach much further than the urban centres of Majuro and Ebeye.

104. Any criminal complaint that comes to the attention of the MIPD from the outer islands is addressed as quickly as possible. Felony offenses are considered priorities for MIPD including domestic violence. These complaints are reported via the local council/police and resources are then deployed from either Majuro or Ebeye to investigate those cases, and to transport offenders for prosecution. The MIPD is tasked by law to provide these services to all parts of the country.

105. MCH/Family Planning is involved with the health mobile missions to the outer islands to provide family planning consultations, contraception, cancer screenings, and dental work. These mobile missions also provide aid for Tuberculosis, HIV/STI, Leprosy, Mental Health, environmental health and non-communicable diseases.

106. MOHHS has installed eight Demand Assigned Multiple Access (DAMA) satellite systems in the following 8 outer island health centres: Ailinglaplap, Jaluit, Jabat, Ebon, Maloelap, Mili (2), and Namu. These community systems are intended to improve communication between urban health centres and outer islands as well as protect patient confidentiality during the referral process. By using the DAMA system sensitive data, numbers, diagnostics, and patient confidentiality can be preserved. This means all information can be reported and received in a shorter time period between doctors, nurses, and health assistants. Unfortunately, effective maintenance and training of operators is difficult given the systems' location on outer islands.

107. WUTMI conducts annual capacity building and awareness raising during the Annual WUMTI Conference. It also makes trips to the outer islands (depending on funding availability) to conduct planning exercises which include action plan development and community mapping to build capacity around project implementation and the financial management of those programs. WUTMI provides grant writing and report writing support. WUTMI acts as the voice of Marshallese women and continues to lobby the government for improved services to women in rural areas. Transportation is very unreliable and expensive for NGOs to regularly

make rounds to offer assistance and support. Due to limited financial resources there are times when WUTMI will "piggy back" with partners to cut expenses.

108. In partnership with IOM and the Marshall Islands Red Cross, WUTMI conducted hazard and vulnerability mapping in communities surrounding all five public high schools as well as fourteen public elementary schools on six atolls Majuro (2 high schools, 4 elementary schools), Ebeye (1 high school, 3 elementary schools), Jaluit (1 high school, 2 elementary schools), Wotje (1 high school, 2 elementary schools), Kili (1 elementary school), Arno (2 elementary schools). Following these mapping activities, action plans were developed to address the pressing and continuing impacts on the livelihoods of women and their families as a result of natural and climate change-induced disasters.

109. WUTMI assisted with relief efforts during the 2013 and 2016 severe drought events. In the 2016 efforts, WUTMI conducted the Cookhouse Confidential focus group discussions with women and young girls about the impacts of disasters on their health and wellbeing, particularly looking at menstrual hygiene management. IOM and WUTMI distributed female hygiene kits during the disaster as a result of our pilot focus group discussions. These were proven to be useful for the women who received them.

110. In partnership with the Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination and the GRMI, WUTMI was part of a team in 2016 that consulted with 22 atolls for a Green Climate Fund (GCF) grant application. The grant is meant to fund climate change adaptation and mitigation projects. The GRMI applied for a water security project to benefit the entire RMI. Part of the application was a gender and social inclusion study to determine the kinds of challenges women and young girls faced with in the community and at school in times of water insecurity. This study gave way to determine the kinds of adaption activities necessary to address the challenges and build on the strengths of the community and the schools.

Disadvantaged groups of women

Issue 18

Please provide information on the situation of women with disabilities, particularly those affected by radiation as a result of nuclear testing, and on the assistance provided to women who have acquired disabilities induced by diabetes and leprosy. Please indicate the progress that has been made in implementing the national policy on disability-inclusive development, 2014-2018, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2015, as well as the progress made in ensuring the representation of persons with disabilities, in particular women, in decision-making bodies. Please also indicate what social protection measures have been put in place to alleviate the impact of radiation on women and girls. Please provide concrete examples of existing social protection programs aimed at reducing the economic burden on older women, women heads of household and single and young mothers.

111. A high level of care is provided for any woman identified as having gestational diabetes. They are referred to the non-communicable diseases program during pregnancy.

112. An implementation plan is in the works for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2015. The Disability Coordination Office continues to seek support in developing, revising and implementing this plan.

Disaster risk reduction and climate change

Issue 19

In paragraph 181 of the report, it is stated that Bikini Atoll is at severe risk from the adverse impacts of climate change. In the light of the fact that the State party is a low-lying coastal country and susceptible to tropical storms and typhoons, please provide information on whether a gender perspective has been integrated into national disaster management, relief and recovery strategies, and indicate the extent to which women participate and are represented in consultations on disaster risk reduction and climate change initiatives, particularly in the outer islands. Please provide information on the progress achieved in implementing the national climate change policy framework and the involvement of women and girls in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

113. Below are extractions from the 2015/22016 Post Disaster Needs Assessment for RMI (following the El Niño Drought of 2016):

"While women and other social groups have been disproportionally affected by the drought of 2016, women's contribution to the household economy is substantial. Women play a critical role in recovery and resilience. Post-disaster recovery resources must strive to safeguard, restore and promote the economic engagement and participation of disadvantaged groups. Women's economic recovery must be protected and accorded the same status and importance as that of men. Targeted investment through extension, financial inclusion, soft loans and skills development must be made in areas with a high representation of women, particularly in the informal sector (i.e. in agriculture, markets and other forms of vulnerable employment). Alternative livelihoods appropriate for remote communities need to be identified and promoted in areas like aquaculture (sea cucumber farming, for example) and hydroponics. Recovery efforts must redress gender inequalities or, at the very least, not perpetuate unequal access to power and resources."

114. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) recommendations include:

115. Subsistence agriculture is the mainstay of the atolls and islands of RMI and extension services for women, especially young women, must be provided, particularly where there is an opportunity to sell any surplus production. Investment in subsistence agriculture must be done in tandem with non-farm skills, market development and financial literacy strengthening. Food security in times of drought could be improved with the promotion of indigenous knowledge and practices related to farming, harvesting and food preservation, while maximizing the use of modern agricultural inputs and practices to increase production volume.

116. Public activities targeting disaster risk management must ensure that women, especially young women, have equal access to jobs and employment, which would include programs to provide child care to enable women to participate. Drought warnings must be conveyed regularly through as many communication channels as possible so that all people have access to information about the anticipated severity and duration of the drought to improve preparedness. This would include the public radio broadcasting station (V7AB), mass SMS text messaging, and messages disseminated through local government, as well as all other means possible such as through traditional leaders, churches, health centres, schools, and WUTMI chapters. Many families living in the urban areas regularly communicate with family members in the outer islands and they should be encouraged to inform their clans about drought warnings. Such communications must provide sufficient time for families to prepare, and must be broadcast frequently with 'real time' status reports

and associated updates. Local government and traditional leaders must mobilize to ensure that communities make every possible preparation.

117. The contribution that handicrafts make to the Marshall Island economy needs to be accurately quantified for the different types of handicrafts produced, input materials, intermediate consumption and cost of production. The value and market chain for handicrafts needs to be better understood, as do the gender roles of women and men in handicraft production."

118. Women in consultations on DRR and Climate Change Initiatives:

- WUTMI, and various youth NGOs are highly involved in Disaster and Climate related work. Often times, the government and other inter-governmental partners such as the IOM issue out contracts to women and youth NGOs to conduct surveys and other post response analysis instruments to communities in the outer islands;
- The youth group *Jo-Jikum* is highly involved in raising awareness through art camps other summer camp activities through their 3 main core programs. The youth programs are designed to enable youths across the Marshall Islands to be an active and sustainable part of the disaster and climate landscape.

119. The National Climate Change Policy 2011 states that it will aim to achieve these 5 thematic objectives while being "mindful of culture and gender":

- To apply a strategic approach to integrating climate change into education and training;
- To mobilize public interest and engagement on the subject of climate change including youth groups that make up a high percentage of the RMI population structure;
- To improve the understanding and use of climate change information, including for decision makers in policy and planning;
- To raise the awareness and profile of this policy at all levels;
- To promote gender specific including appropriate traditional knowledge in adaptation responses.

120. As a cross cutting issue, some of the achievements so far include the following:

- RMI Youth Policy 2014: takes into consideration climate change and youths' role and empowerment;
- Small Grants Program: youth and gender is always incorporated into concept development;
- *Ha Kuk Ha Jimor* Initiative: Social and Health mechanism to collect data and information particularly from youths (mainly young girls) and women in the Outer Islands particularly targeting health and other social information. This information will help define the needs of girls and women with respect to health, social and domestic issues;
- Cookhouse Confidential Initiative: Indigenous methodology to disseminate information and collect data on related and relevant gender issues as it relates to climate impacts, such as droughts and other extreme weather events. This methodology was developed in order to be better aware of women's and girls' needs during an emergency or disaster situation as well as to understand better idea how to plan and respond to for longer term climate change adaptation needs.

121. The National Action Plan (NAP) for Disaster Risk Management (2008–2018) will soon be up for review and updating. The review and update to a new NAP will include a gender lens.

Marriage and family relations

Issue 20

According to information before the Committee, under the Child Rights Protection Act, 2015, the legal age of marriage for both women and men is 18. However, the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, 1988, sets the minimum age of marriage with parental consent for girls at 16, while that for boys is set at 18. Please provide information on the progress made to adopt the births, deaths and marriages registration (amendment) bill, which will raise the minimum age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18 and amend section 434 of the Act, which exempts customary marriage from any minimum age stipulation. Please indicate what steps are being taken to combat forced marriages and to assess the economic impact on women and girls of the fault-based legal regime on divorce. Please also indicate whether women and men have equal rights to legal guardianship of their children during and after marriage.

122. The 2016 amendment to the Births, Deaths and Marriage Registration Act 1988 raised the legal age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18.

123. Customary marriage often occurs when a young woman gets pregnant. Sometimes this marriage may be forced, causing the young couple to have difficulty sustaining their relationship. When they get separated the mother is usually left with the child(ren). Families do not often seek child support from the father. When they do, negative stereotypes are often attached to the woman and her family.

Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20 (1)

Issue 21

Please indicate any progress made with respect to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention.

124. The Cabinet will soon introduce a resolution pertaining to the Optional Protocol of the CEDAW.